

# **MERCHANT MARINERS DOCUMENT**

<b>REFERENCE GUIDE</b>
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Regional Examination Center  
San Francisco Bay  
Coast Guard Island, Building 14  
Alameda, California 94541  
(510) 437 5732 FAX: (510) 437-3096

## **OFFICE HOURS**

**OPEN:** Monday through Friday 8:00 am - 11:30 am, 12:30 pm - 3:30 pm

**CLOSED:** Saturdays, Sundays, Federal Holidays.

**OR** VISIT US AT OUR WEBSITE: <http://www.uscg.mil/D11/msosf/depts/>

**All information and forms required to complete the application are enclosed. Please review this entire handout before submitting your application. Following the directions in this handout will help to avoid delays in the renewal process which are typically caused by incomplete applications.**

Applications may be submitted in person or mailed to any Regional Examination Center (REC). If you prefer to renew your license or document at the Regional Examination Center, we're located in the Marine Safety Office on Coast Guard Island, which is near the southern end of Alameda. Transactions are completed on a first come/first served basis and may take more than one day to complete.

## **DIRECTIONS TO THE COAST GUARD MARINE SAFETY OFFICE**

When traveling on Hwy 80 West (from locations north of the San Francisco Bay area), take Hwy 580 West to Hwy 980 West (Oakland) to Hwy 880 South (San Jose). While on Hwy 880 South, take the **16th Avenue Embarcadero** exit. At the stop sign at the end of the exit ramp, turn left onto the Embarcadero, follow it for a distance of about mile to Dennison Street. You will see a green sign with an arrow pointing right to Coast Guard Island. Turn right on Dennison Street and drive over the bridge to Coast Guard Island. The security guard at the gate to Coast Guard Island will give you a base pass for your vehicle.

When traveling on Hwy 880 North (Oakland), from locations south of the San Francisco Bay area, take the **5th Avenue Embarcadero** off ramp exit. Go underneath the Hwy 880 overpass to the stop sign. At the stop sign, turn left onto the Embarcadero. Follow it for a distance of about 1 mile to Dennison Street. Turn right on Dennison Street and drive over the bridge to Coast Guard Island. The security guard at the gate to Coast Guard Island will give you a base pass for your vehicle.

**NOTE:** After you receive your vehicle pass, take the first right on Hudson then left on Bear Drive. Go straight until you see the cannon and flag pole which are right in front of Building 14. We are located on the first floor in Building 14 in Room 109. In order to bring your vehicle onto the base, you must have a valid drivers license, vehicle registration, and proof of insurance. If you do not have the required vehicle documents, you may park off the base and walk to Building 14 after checking in with the gate guard.

**BART** - Take the ORANGE or GREEN Line to the Oakland **FRUITVALE** Station. You can then take a taxi from the BART station to Coast Guard Island.

## GENERAL MMD INFORMATION

Members of the U.S. Merchant Marine are persons employed on board merchant vessels of the United States. They are civilians and are hired either directly by a steamship company or through a marine labor union operating merchant vessels. All persons employed aboard United States merchant vessels of 100 gross tons or more are required to have a valid U.S. Merchant Mariner's Document (MMD), also known as a Z-Card or seaman's papers. There are many ratings available and more than one may be combined on one MMD. The following is a breakdown of the types of MMD's:

1. A MMD WITHOUT qualified ratings means an entry level MMD that allows you to work as an ordinary seaman in the deck department, a wiper in the engineering department or as a member of the Steward's department serving as a food handler in the galley. An entry level MMD requires no prior maritime experience and requires physician's approval that the applicant can do the following: climb steep or vertical ladder, maintain balance on moving decks, pull heavy hoses up to 400 feet and open/close doors that weigh up to 56 pounds. Also the applicant must get provide a drug-free certificate that is completed at a COAST GUARD approved drug lab. The drug test is called a NIDA-five, no other drug test will be accepted.
2. A MMD WITH a qualified rating in the deck department may be endorsed as Able Seaman (AB) or Lifeboatman (LB).
3. A MMD with a qualified rating in the engineering department may be endorsed as a Qualified Member of the Engineering Department (QMED).

In searching for a job, shipping companies and labor unions are listed in the yellow pages under SHIPPING COMPANIES, STEAMSHIP AGENCIES, STEAMSHIP COMPANIES, LABOR ORGANIZATIONS, AND LABOR UNIONS. In addition, it might be of benefit to check the phone book yellow pages for other ports or companies not located in the San Francisco Bay Area. The Regional Exam Center (REC) San Francisco Bay is one of 17 RECs nationally which issue MMDs and licenses to merchant mariners. The REC is NOT a job placement organization, and obtaining an MMD or license is not a guarantee of employment.

THIS GUIDE is intended to help an applicant apply for a merchant mariner's document. The information contained within may not be all inclusive for each situation and is subject to change without notice.

## **CHECKLIST FOR OBTAINING A MERCHANT MARINER'S DOCUMENT**

(See specific sections cited for additional information)

1. \_\_\_\_ **APPLICATION.** See (part I) of this handout. Completely fill out the License/MMD Application form.  
NOTE: All ORIGINAL MMD's must be picked up in person.
2. \_\_\_\_ **AGE REQUIREMENT.** All persons must be at least 16 years of age. If you are 16 or 17 years old, you must provide a written and notarized affidavit of consent from a parent or legal guardian giving permission to go to sea.
3. \_\_\_\_ **ADMINISTRATIVE FEES.** See (part II) Fees are charged at the time a service is provided. For an MMD WITH qualified ratings, the evaluation fee of \$60.00 must be included with the application.
4. \_\_\_\_ **PROOF OF CITIZENSHIP.** See (part III) of this handout. Only the original or certified copy of the original is acceptable.
5. \_\_\_\_ **SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER.** See (part IV) of this handout.
6. \_\_\_\_ **NAME DISCREPANCY.** If there is an inconsistency between the name on your proof of citizenship or social security card, and the name you are now using, proof of your legal name is required. The following is acceptable proof: court-appointed name change, marriage certificate, dissolution of marriage decree, or school records.
7. \_\_\_\_ **PROFESSIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR QUALIFIED RATINGS.** See (part V) of this handout which explains the requirements for AB, QMED, or LB. Prior experience is not required for an MMD endorsed WITHOUT qualified ratings.
8. \_\_\_\_ **DOCUMENTING SEA TIME.** See (part VI) of this handout.
9. \_\_\_\_ **PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS.** See (part VII) of this handout. A physical exam must be current within the past 12 months. Use Physical Examination form CG-719K enclosed.
10. \_\_\_\_ **DRUG-FREE CERTIFICATE.** See (part VIII) "Screening for Illegal Drugs."
11. \_\_\_\_ **EXAMINATION.** See (paragraph ) of this handout. No examination are required for an MMD endorsed WITHOUT qualified ratings.

**NOTE: ONLY ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED**

## **I. APPLICATION**

The application must be completely filled out. Each application must be accompanied by the appropriate evaluation fee (see section II below) and an approved application is valid for 12 months. You must appear in person to obtain your MMD once approved. You must bring in a Current picture identification.

**FINGERPRINTS:** All applicants seeking an original license are required to submit two sets of fingerprints. Fingerprints may be taken by your local law enforcement authorities and submitted with the application. If the application is submitted in person, fingerprints may be taken by a legal instrument examiner at our office upon request. Otherwise, fingerprints will be taken when the applicant comes to test.

Your fingerprints will be forwarded to the F.B.I. for verification of the information reported in your application. A record of all arrests and convictions will be returned to our office. If you have a criminal record and fail to reveal it on your application, you may be subject to criminal penalty. In addition, your MMD may be rendered null and void and you will be required to surrender it to the Coast Guard or you may be charged to appear at a formal hearing before a Coast Guard Administrative Law Judge. The most important point here is to tell the truth on your application. A criminal record does not necessarily mean that you will be denied a MMD. Each application will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

## **II. ADMINISTRATIVE FEES:**

	EVALUATION	EXAMINATION	ISSUANCE	TOTAL
<b>Original Entry Level</b> \$140 (No qualified ratings)	\$95	\$0	\$45	
<b>Qualified ratings</b> (Endorsed as AB, QMED, LB, or Tankerman)	\$95	\$140	\$45	\$280
<b>Qualified ratings for endorsements</b> (No qualified ratings)	\$95	\$140	\$45	\$280
<b>Qualified ratings for upgrade/raise in grade</b> (Endorsed as AB, QMED, LB, or Tankerman)	\$95	\$140	\$45	\$280

PAYMENT may be made by personal check or money order made out to: U.S. COAST GUARD. Temporary checks and Traveler's checks are not acceptable. Cash, in the exact amount, may be accepted when submitted in person at the REC. However, cash should not be sent through the mail.

## **III. CITIZENSHIP REQUIREMENTS:**

Applicants must present acceptable proof of citizenship. The Coast Guard may reject any evidence of citizenship that is not believed to be authentic. Identification should agree with current name. If not, the applicant will need to submit court records documenting the name change. Acceptable documentation may include original court documentation, original marriage/dissolution of marriage certificate or original school records. The following are acceptable forms of evidence for establishing U.S. citizenship.

- ◆ Birth certificate or birth registration
- ◆ Certificate of naturalization
- ◆ Baptismal certificate or parish record recorded within one year after birth
- ◆ Statement of a practicing physician certifying attendance at the birth and who possesses a record showing the date and location at which it occurred
- ◆ State Department passport
- ◆ Merchant Mariner's Document issued by the Coast Guard which shows the holder as a United States citizen
- ◆ Delayed certificate of birth issued under a state seal in the absence of any collateral facts indicating fraud in its procurement

- ◆ Certificate of citizenship issued by the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service

**RESIDENT ALIENS** may be issued a merchant mariner's document. To qualify, the applicant must be a permanent resident of the United States in possession of an alien registration card or INS work authorization certificate and must present proof of citizenship. If the documentation is not in English, a notarized translation is required.

#### **IV. SOCIAL SECURITY CARD:**

Evidence of having a Social Security Number (SSN) must be submitted. An ORIGINAL Social Security Card (SSC) issued by the Social Security Administration is acceptable and must **NOT** be laminated. Plastic or metal plate copies of the SSC are not recognized replacements for the official card. Military discharge papers (DD-214) will not be accepted as a substitute for the SSC.

If you do not have your original SSC, you can apply for a duplicate. Receipts issued for a duplicate SSC by the Social Security Administration are not acceptable evidence, but can be used for evaluation purposes only. If you use a social security receipt for evaluation, an MMD will not be issued until you have presented the original SSC or a Social Security Administration computer print out reflecting your name and SSN.

#### **V. PROFESSIONAL REQUIREMENTS:**

**ABLE SEAMAN (AB).** All sea service must have been obtained on vessels in the deck department while underway. The sea service requirements for the different levels of Able Seaman are as follows:

- a. Able Seaman (Unlimited) - A total of three years service on Near Coastal or Ocean waters (1,080 days). All of this time must have been on vessels of 100 gross tons or more.
- b. Able Seaman (Limited) - Eighteen months service on Near Coastal or Ocean waters (540 days). All of this time must have been on vessels of 100 gross tons or more.
- c. Able Seaman (Special) - Twelve months (360 days) service on board vessels greater than 100 gross tons or at least 65 feet long
- d. Able Seaman (OSV) - Six months (180 days) service on board vessels over 15 gross tons.

**QUALIFIED MEMBER OF THE ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT (QMED).** You must present at least six months (180 days) of underway service working in a capacity at least equal to that of a wiper or coal passer. Service must have been on vessels greater than 100 gross tons with an operating walk-in engine room.

**LIFEBOATMAN (LB).** You must present at least one year (360 days) of underway service in the Deck department or two years (720 days) in any other department. Service must have been on vessels greater than 100 gross ton **OR** successfully complete a Coast Guard approved training course, you will still need to show at least 6 months (180) days at sea board ocean or coastwise vessels.

#### **VI. DOCUMENTING SEA TIME:**

ORIGINAL Certificates of Discharge to Merchant Seaman (CG-718A) are acceptable proof of sea service. Letters from maritime companies on original company letterhead signed by an authorized company official are also acceptable proof of sea service. These letters must contain the name and official number of the vessel, the particulars of the vessel (length, horsepower, gross tonnage, etc.), the capacity in which you worked, the route on which the vessel transited, and the dates and number of days you were underway on each vessel. If you worked 12 hour days while underway, ensure that your letter of sea service indicates this so that you will be given credit for 1.5 days (time and a half) per 12 hour day. Time and a half credit is only given to those individuals who complete 12 hours of day working or watchstanding on vessels where such practice is legally allowed. A six on, six off watch schedule will be acceptable, but overtime will not.

Prior service military personnel can obtain a **TRANSCRIPT OF SEA SERVICE** or **CERTIFIED HISTORY OF ASSIGNMENTS** taken from their service record by completing an SF-180 form and sending it to the appropriate address shown on the form (do not send the SF-180 form to this Regional Examination Center). A SF-180 can be provided from this office upon request. If you are on active duty you may provide a letter from your on original the

name of each vessel you have served on, when you reported aboard and departed each vessel, and the rank/rating held while attached to each vessel. **ONLY 60%** of your military sea service is credited, for example, if you have 1,080 days

of military sea time, only 648 days will be credited. A DD-214 WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED AS DOCUMENTATION OF SEA TIME. **NOTE: ALL FOREIGN SEA SERVICE MUST BE IN ENGLISH AND NOTARIZED AS BEING A TRUE TRANSLATION.**

## **VII. PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS:**

### **A. FORM CG-719K: (Physical Examination Report)**

All applicants for a Merchant Mariner's Document (MMD) endorsed with a qualified rating other than Lifeboatman are required to submit a physical examination report (form 719K pages 1 and 2) completed by a U.S. Licensed physician within one year of the application. This report certifies that the applicant is in good health and has no physical impairment or medical condition which would render him or her incompetent to perform the ordinary duties required by the MMD. Please ensure this form has been completed entirely before forwarding it to our office. Delays in approving applications are often caused by incomplete physical examination reports. For example, block 15 addresses medications. Physicians will often overlook including a statement regarding whether or not the applicant is experiencing side effects from prescribed medications. If side effects are experienced, they must be listed. If no side effects are experienced, then a statement to that effect must be included.

Occasionally, an applicant may not meet the vision, hearing, or general physical condition required for a MMD. This does not automatically cause an applicant to be denied a MMD. Upon request of the examining physician, a physical waiver may be granted by the Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard if extenuating circumstances warrant special consideration. Applicants should submit this request to our office which will then be forwarded to Coast Guard Headquarters approval. Waivers are not normally granted to applicants with insulin dependent or poorly controlled diabetes, applicants on psychotropic medication, or applicants with any disease which may result in the gradual deterioration in the performance of their duties or compromise shipboard safety at sea.

## **VIII. DRUG SCREEN:**

Applicants must provide at the time of application satisfactory evidence of compliance with the Substance abuse and Mental health Service administrations (SAMHSA) formerly known as NIDA). This requirement can be met by one of following:

- a. A letter or report from the Medical Review officer stating that the applicant has passed a chemical test for dangerous drug conducted in accordance with Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations Part 40 within the past six months.
- b. A letter on Company/Union stationery signed by an official indicating the name of the **SAMHSA/(NIDA)** approved lab, and that the applicant passed a pre-employment test for dangerous drugs within the past six months.
- c. A letter on Company/Union stationery indicating the applicant has been in a random drug testing program meeting the criteria Title 46 CFR 16.230 during the previous 185 days, has been subject to a random testing program for at least 60 days, and did not fail or refuse to participate in a chemical test for dangerous drugs.
- d. **Active duty military:** A letter from the Command indicating the applicant has been subject to random drug testing during the previous twelve months, and has not failed a chemical drug test and has not refused to participate in required drug tests.

Once all of the requirements for a merchant mariner document with a qualified rating have been evaluated, the applicant will be notified and may schedule a date to sit for his/her written examination. An approved application is valid for one year. If the credential is not obtained within that period, a new application and appropriate fees will be required. All examinations are in the English language only.



The following is a breakdown of the different exams:

**ABLE SEAMAN (AB) AND LIFEBOATMAN (LB).** Applicants seeking certification as AB, shall prove to the Coast Guard by written examination and by actual demonstration, knowledge of seamanship and the ability to carry out effectively all the duties required of an AB. Applicants seeking **only** the LB endorsement, must complete the written and practical Lifeboat exams.

In the practical lifeboat demonstration, the applicant shall show ability by calling out the required Oar Commands and taking charge of a lifeboat evolution by safely directing the operation of clearing away, swinging out, lowering into the water, raising and securing the lifeboat. This is performed on a scaled down version of a working lifeboat at the REC.

Applicants for Able Seaman Offshore Supply Vessels (OSV) take an exam similar to those taken by AB's (Special, Limited and Unlimited), but are not required to take the written and practical LB exams.

**QUALIFIED MEMBER OF THE ENGINE DEPARTMENT (QMED).** Applicants for QMED may test for any or all of the following ratings:

- a. Fireman/Watertender
- b. Oiler
- c. Deck Engineer
- d. Junior Engineer
- e. Refrigeration Engineer
- f. Electrician
- g. Machinist
- h. Pumpman

Before taking any of the above rating examinations, applicants are required to pass a QMED (GEN) general knowledge examination. Once you have passed the QMED (GEN) exam, it is valid for one year. NOTE: Passing the QMED (GEN) exam does not qualify you for an endorsement on your MMD, you must pass this exam and at least one rating exam before getting your MMD. Other endorsable ratings as Deck Engine Mechanic or Engineman do not require additional testing. However, applicants for these ratings must comply with additional service requirements while holding certain QMED ratings.